

THE ART OF APPRECIATION

There is nothing that gets you to your destination in life quicker than the power of Thank You. Wherever you are, whatever you want to achieve, the power of thank you will take you across the finishing line. Sounds too good to be true? Surely it can't be that easy! There has to be more to it than that! These are the most frequent cries we hear when this suggestion is offered as a solution to the pain, fear or other obstacles blocking one's path. However, it really is this simple. All it requires is consistent practice (see Practice Makes Permanence). Good habits become virtues, bad habits become vices and if we do something over and over again, it eventually becomes part of us. So, it's your choice. Do you want to collect more vices, or do you want to erase them by gathering more virtues?

For those of you who have already begun this journey you will know this practice is truly awesome (see The Power of Thank You 1 & 2 and Thank You for the Gift of...). It can lift you out of any mood and help you transcend any situation quite quickly. It brings about a feeling of joy and a perspective that brightens the bleakest of moments. Your challenges then no longer seem daunting as all things appear possible. Thank You is the antidote for all your ills. Try it and see. To really experience its full power, however, the act of Thank You must develop into the heartfelt emotion of Appreciation. What's the difference? Well, saying Thank You is to look for and count one's blessings over and over again and though this practice is a wonderful starting point, the danger is that it could become a simple recital, repetitive in nature and no more than a ritual, devoid of true feeling. Appreciation on the other hand is thank you with a heart that's full of emotion. To achieve this requires a more precise and conscious effort. This is why we call it the Art of Appreciation as it is a skill that one needs to practice in order to develop.

Appreciation is somewhat of a paradox because it can, with the right effort, be mastered quite quickly but do not make the mistake of thinking that simply reading this will be sufficient (see All You Need to Know). To master the technique, you must make it part of your daily routine. Find 15-20 minutes when you can be in solitude and concentrate on just one event each time. Choose something or someone whose real value you have lost sight of and focus on your choice with all your heart. Start by giving thanks, then as you continue begin to become aware of the deep significance and real value that the event or person holds for you. Consider what the subject of your focus means to you, the difference it makes to your life, and how your life would be without it. Don't rush to get to the end of the process. To turn Thank You into Appreciation you need to 'feel' your way through - literally inhabit your thoughts and allow the feelings emerging from such genuine contemplation, to rise in you. This is not an intellectual excursion, it is a journey of the heart, a journey of feelings. Celebrate that person or the object of your affections as if you really mean it, as if you may never get that chance again. Embrace whatever you're focusing on with all that you are. When you focus in this way and with pure and joyous intent the response from within your own heart is beautiful and the direction in which your life moves is filled with countless blessings and surprises.

For those of you who want a life of awe and splendour, a life that provides whatever you need, practise the Art of Appreciation again and again. Make it a way of life. Dwell so deeply in that place of appreciation that your heart is reluctant to leave. Refuse, from this moment, to take your life for granted and rejoice daily in both the great and small!